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L E T T E R

CONCERNING

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T O L E R A T I O N .

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By J O H N L O C K E, Gent.

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The F O U R T H E D I T I O N .

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Civil Governors go miserably out of their Province,  
whenever they take upon them the Care of Truth.  
If it wants such aid, it cannot be of GOD.

DOCTOR PRICE.



W I N D S O R :

Printed by ALDEN SPOONER, for JOSEPH THOMSON.

M, DCC, LXXXVIII.

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W. H. D. & R.

Printed by W. H. D. & R. at the

MUSEUM



To his Excellency THOMAS  
CHITTENDEN, Esq.

*WITH* joy I congratulate the young but rising State, under the re-election of your auspicious rule; and the Constitution in particular, which is the strong basis of our government, and a glory to the revolution of America, while it stands free from being perverted.

The great Mr. John Locke, in a letter a century ago, espoused the cause of liberty, to the joy of every sincere worshipper of God. But your Excellency may remember the former edition had peculiarities belonging to the age, country and genius of that people; but in this edition I have corrected some few of them, and some of the obsolete terms—retrenching some of his negative sentences—suppressing some redundances that carried the essence of tautology—explaining some things that appeared unintelligible, perhaps by the fault of the Translator; yet endeavoring by none of those small amendments to confront the ideas of the author. I had nevertheless, rather subjoin to the idea of a modern and much celebrated author in his ingenious distinctions, who says, “It is presumption in any to claim a right to any superiority over their brethren; such a claim is implied whenever any of them pretend to tolerate the rest.” And again he says, “Where it is only taught that property is founded in grace, and not feloniously” put in practice, it is not to be regarded by the authority of the “magistrate.” Yet I hope there may be rea-

utility gained from this letter by every candid reader. There is nevertheless, Arminian strokes remaining common perhaps to the age or man who wrote it, that are not rectified, but as the design of it was not to describe doctrine, (I hope it will disgust none) but the sole of it was to distinguish between the power of the magistrate and religious liberty.

I desire to thank God, and rulers under him, that infringements on our natural rights in matters of religion, are ceased, in comparison to what they were centuries ago; and that the constitution of Vermont affords us a mirror to behold the virtue of the compilers, as well as safety to all the subjects of your domain, while its parts remain inviolate, and the governed cease from the spirit of innovation and faction; which is the hearty prayer of one of your subjects, that the laws may go forth from the Legislature, and be executed according to the true intent of the constitution; and that perfect uninterrupted liberty in matters of religion, may take place, so that all struggles and scribbles may in this respect be useless.

To this end may your Excellency preside a lasting blessing to a peaceable, prosperous, and happy people; mean while would beg leave to inscribe the following letter to your Excellency's candid perusal.

THE EDITOR.

Windsor, October 24th, 1788.

TO





## T O T H E R E A D E R.

**T**H E ensuing Letter concerning Toleration, first printed in Latin this very year, 1690, in Holland, has already been translated both into Dutch and French. So general and speedy an approbation may therefore bespeak its favorable reception in England and America, I think indeed there is no nation under Heaven, in which so much has already been said upon that subject, as ours. But yet certainly there is no people that stand in more need of having something further said and done amongst them, in this point, than we do.

Our government has not only been partial in matters of religion, but those also who have suffered under that partiality, & have therefore endeavored by their writings to vindicate their own rights and liberties, have for the most part done it upon narrow principles, suited only to the interests of their own sects.

This narrowness of spirit on all sides has undoubtedly been the principal occasion of our miseries and confusions. But whatever have been the occasion, it is now high time to seek for a thorough cure. We have need of more generous remedies than what have yet been made use of in our distemper. It is neither declarations of indulgence, nor acts of comprehension, such as have yet been practised or projected amongst us, that can do the work. The first will but palliate, the second increase our evil.

*Absolute*



## TO the READER.

*Absolute liberty, just and true liberty, equal and impartial liberty, is the thing that we stand in need of. Now though this has indeed been much talked of, I doubt it has not been much understood; I am sure not at all practised, either by our Governors towards the people, in general, or by any dissenting parties of the people towards one another.*

*I cannot therefore but hope, that this discourse, which treats of that subject, however briefly, yet more exactly than any we have yet seen, demonstrating both the equitableness and practicableness of the thing, will be esteemed highly seasonable, by all men that have souls large enough to prefer the true cause of liberty before that of a party.*

*It is for the use of such as are already so spirited, or to inspire that spirit into those that are not, that I have translated it into our language.*

*But the thing it self is so short, that it will not bear a longer preface. I leave it therefore to the consideration of my countrymen, and heartily wish they may make the use of it that it appears to be designed for.*

THE TRANSLATOR.

A  
L E T T E R.

HONORED SIR,

SINCE you are pleased to enquire what are my thoughts about the mutual toleration of christians in their different professions of religion, I must needs answer you freely, that I esteem that toleration, or liberty to think and act for themselves in matters of religion, to be the chief characteristical mark of the true church. For whatsoever some people boast of the antiquity of places and names, or of the pomp of their outward worship; others, of the reformation of their discipline; all, of the orthodoxy of their faith: these things, and all others of this nature, are much rather marks of men striving for power and empire over one another, than of the church of Christ. Let any one have never so true a claim to all these things, yet if he be destitute of charity, meekness, and goodwill in general towards all mankind, even to those that are not christians, he is certainly yet short of being a true christian himself. Luke 22. 25 *The kings of the Gentiles exercise lordship over them*, said our Saviour to his disciples, *but ye shall not be so*. The business of true religion is quite another thing. It is not instituted in order to the erecting of an external pomp, nor to  
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the obtaining of ecclesiastical dominion, nor to the exercising of compulsive force ; but to the regulating mens lives according to the rules of virtue and piety. Whosoever will lift himself under the banner of Christ, must in the first place, and above all things, make war upon his own lusts and vices. It is in vain for any man to usurp the name of Christian, without holiness of life, purity of manners, and benignity and meekness of spirit.

*Thou when thou art converted, strengthen thy brethren,* (Luke 22. 32.) said our Lord to Peter. It would indeed be very hard for one that appears careless about his own salvation, to persuade me that he were extremely concerned for mine. For it is impossible that those should sincerely and heartily apply themselves to make other people Christians, who have not really embraced the Christian religion in their own hearts. If the gospel and the apostles may be credited, no man can be a Christian without *charity*, and without *that faith which works not by force, but by love*. Now I appeal to the consciences of those that persecute, destroy, and kill other men upon pretence of religion, whether they do it out of friendship and kindness towards them, or no : and I shall then, and not till then, believe they do so, when I shall see those fiery zealots correcting, in the same manner, their friends and acquaintance, for the manifest sins they commit against the precepts of the gospel ; when I shall see them persecute with fire and sword, the members of their own communion that are tainted with enormous vices, and without amendment are in danger of eternal perdition ; and when I shall see them thus express their desire of the salvation of their souls,

by



by the infliction of torments, and exercise of all manner of cruelties. For if it be out of a principle of charity, as they pretend, and love to mens souls, that they deprive them of their estates, maim them with corporal punishment, starve and torment them in prisons, and in the end even take away their lives ; I say, if all this be done merely to make men Christians, and procure their salvation, why then do they suffer *whoredom, fraud, malice, and such like enormities* ; (Rom. 1.) which manifestly relishes of heathenish corruption to abound amongst their flocks and people ? These, and such like things, are certainly more contrary to the glory of God, to the purity of the church, and to the salvation of souls, than any conscientious dissent from ecclesiastical decisions, or separation from public worship, whilst accompanied with innocency of life. Why then does this burning zeal for God, for the church, and for the salvation of souls ; burning, I say, literally, with *fire and faggot* ; pass by those moral vices and wickednesses, without any chastisement, which are acknowledged by all men to be diametrically opposite to the profession of christianity ; and bend all its nerves either to the introducing of ceremonies, or to the establishment of opinions, which for the most part are about nice and intricate matters, that exceed the capacity of ordinary understandings ? Which of the parties contending about these things is in the right, which of them is guilty of schism or heresy, whether those that domineer or those that suffer, will then at last be manifest, when the cause of their separation comes to be  
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judged

judged of. He certainly who follows Christ, embraces his doctrine and bears his yoke, though he forsake both father and mother, separate from the public assembly and ceremonies of his country, or whatsoever else he relinquishes, will not then be judged an heretic.

Now, though the divisions that are amongst sects should be allowed to be never so obstructive of the salvation of souls, yet nevertheless, *adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, idolatry, and such like things, cannot be denied to be works of the flesh*; concerning which the apostle has expressly declared, that *they who do them shall not inherit the kingdom of God*. Whosoever therefore is sincerely solicitous about the kingdom of God, and thinks it his duty to endeavor the enlargement of it amongst men, ought to apply himself with no less care and industry to the rooting out of these immoralities, than to the extirpation of sects. But if any one do otherwise, and whilst he is cruel and implacable towards those who differ from him in opinion, and be indulgent to such immoralities as are unbecoming the name of a Christian, let such a one talk never so much of the church, he plainly demonstrates by his actions, that 'tis an earthly kingdom he aims at, and not the advancement of the kingdom of God.

That any man should think fit to cause another man, whose salvation he heartily desires, to expire in torments, and that even in an unconverted estate, would, I confess, seem very strange to me; and, I think, to any other also. But no body, surely, will ever believe that such a carriage can proceed from charity,



charity, love, or good-will. If any one maintain that men ought to be compelled by fire and sword to profess certain doctrines, and conform to this or that exterior worship, without any regard had unto their morals ; if any one endeavor to convert those that are erroneous unto the faith, by forcing them to profess things that they do not believe, and allowing them to practice things that the gospel does not permit ; it cannot be doubted indeed but such a one is desirous to have a numerous assembly joined in the same profession with himself : but that he principally intends by those means to compose a truly Christian church, is altogether incredible. It is not therefore to be wondered at, if those who do not really contend for the advancement of the true religion, and of the church of Christ, make use of arms that do not belong to the christian warfare. If, like the Captain of our salvation, they sincerely desired the good of souls, they would tread in the steps, and follow the perfect example of that Prince of Peace, who sent out his soldiers to the subduing of nations, and gathering them into his church, not armed with the sword, or other instruments of force, but prepared with the gospel of peace, and with the exemplary holiness of their conversation. This was his method. Though if infidels were to be converted by force, if those who are either blind or obstinate were to be drawn off from their errors by armed soldiers, we know very well that it was much more easy for him to do it with armies of heavenly legions, than for any son of the church, how potent soever, with all his dragons.

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The toleration of those who differ from others in matters of religion, is so agreeable to the gospel of Jesus Christ, and to the genuine reason of mankind, that it seem monstrous for men to be so blind, as not to perceive the necessity and advantage of it, in so clear a light. I will not here tax the *pride* and *ambition* of some; the *uncharitable zeal* of others. Yet these are faults from which human affairs can perhaps scarce ever be perfectly freed; but yet such as no body will bear the plain imputation of, without covering them with some specious colour; and so pretend to commendation, whilst they are carried away by their own irregular passions. But however, that some may not colour their spirit of persecution and unchristian cruelty, with a pretence of care of the public weal, and observation of the laws; and that others, under pretence of religion, may not seek impunity for their licentiousness. In a word, that none may impose either upon himself or others, by the pretences of loyalty or obedience to the prince, or of tenderness and sincerity in the worship of God. I esteem it above all things necessary to distinguish exactly the business of civil government from that of religion, and to settle the just bounds that lie between the one and the other. If this be not done, there can be no end put to the controversies that will be always arising, between those who have, or at least pretend to have, on the one side, a concernment for the interest of mens souls, and on the other side, a care of the commonwealth.

~~The~~ *commonwealth* seems to me to be a society of men constituted only for the procuring, preserving, and advancing of their own *civil interests*. *Civil*

*Civil interests* I call life, liberty, and health; and the possession of outward things, such as money, lands, houses, furniture, and the like.

It is the duty of the civil magistrate, by the impartial execution of equal laws, to secure unto all the people in general, and to every one of his subjects in particular, the just possession of these things belonging to this life. If any one presume to violate the laws of public justice and equity, established for the preservation of these things, his presumption is to be checked by the fear of punishment, consisting in the deprivation of those civil interests, or goods, which otherwise he might and ought to enjoy. But seeing no man does willingly suffer himself to be punished by the deprivation of any part of his goods, and much less of his liberty or life, therefore is the magistrate armed with the force and strength of all his subjects, in order to the punishment of those who violate other mens civil rights.

Now that the whole jurisdiction of the magistrate reaches only to these civil concerns; and that all civil power and dominion, is bounded and confined to the care of promoting these things; and that it neither can nor ought in any manner to be extended to the salvation of souls; these following considerations seem unto me abundantly to demonstrate.

*First*, Because the care of souls is not committed to the civil magistrate any more than to other men. It is not committed unto him, I say, by God; because it appears not that God has ever given any such authority to one man over another, as to compel



pel any one to his religion. Nor can any such power be vested in the magistrate by the *consent of the people* ; because no man can so far abandon the care of his own salvation, as blindly to leave it to the choice of any other, whether prince or subject, to prescribe to him what faith or worship he shall embrace. For no man can, if he would, conform his faith to the dictates of another. All the life and power of true religion consists in the internal persuasion of the mind ; and faith is not faith without believing. Whatever profession we make, or whatever outward worship we may conform to, if we are not fully satisfied in our mind that the one is true, and the other well-pleasing unto God ; such profession & such practice, far from being any furtherance, are indeed great obstacles to our salvation. I say, in offering thus unto God Almighty such a worship as we esteem to be displeasing unto him, we add unto the number of our other sins those also of hypocrisy, and contempt of his Divine Majesty.

*In the second place.* The care of souls cannot belong to the civil magistrate, because his power consists only in outward force : but true and saving religion consists in the inward persuasion of the mind ; without which nothing can be acceptable to God. And such is the nature of the understanding, that it cannot be compelled to the belief of any thing by outward force. Confiscation of estate, can have no such efficacy as to make men change the inward judgment that they have framed of things.

It may indeed be alledged, that the magistrate may make use of arguments, and thereby draw the  
heterodox



heterodox into the way of truth. I grant it. But this is common to him with other men. In teaching, instructing, the erroneous by reason, he may certainly do what becomes any good man to do. Magistracy does not oblige him to put off either humanity or christianity. But it is one thing to persuade, another to command : one thing to press with arguments, another with penalties. Every man has commission to admonish, exhort, and convince another of error. But to give laws, receive obedience, and compel with the sword, belongs to none but the magistrate. And upon this ground I affirm, that the magistrate's power extends not to the establishing of any articles of faith, or forms of worship, by the force of his laws. For laws are of no force at all without penalties, and penalties in this case are absolutely impertinent ; because they are not proper to convince the mind. It is only light and evidence that can work a change in mens opinions. And that light can in no manner proceed from corporal sufferings, or any other outward penalties.

*In the third place.* The care of the salvation of mens souls cannot belong to the magistrate ; because, though the rigor of laws and the force of penalties were capable to convince and change mens minds, yet would not that help at all to the salvation of their souls. For there being but one truth, one way to heaven ; what hopes is there that more men would be led into it, if they had no other rule to follow but the religion of the court ; and were put under a necessity to quit the light of their own reason ;

reason ; to oppose the dictates of their own consciences ; and blindly to resign up themselves to the will of their governors, and to the religion, which either ignorance or superstition had chanced to establish in the countries where they were born ? In the variety and contradiction of opinions in religion, wherein the princes of the world are much divided, the narrow way would be much straightened. One country alone would be in the right, and all the rest of the world would be put under an obligation of following their princes in the ways that he leads. And that which heightens the absurdity, and very ill suits the dignity of a Deity, men would owe their eternal happiness or misery to the places of their nativity.

These considerations, to omit many others that might have been urged to the same purpose, seem unto me sufficient to conclude that all the power of civil government relates only to mens civil interests ; is confined to the care of the things of this world ; and hath nothing to do with the world to come.

*Let us now consider what a church is.* A church then I take to be a voluntary society of men, joining themselves together of their own accord, in order to the public worshipping of God, in such a manner as they judge acceptable to him.

I say it is a free and voluntary society. No body is born a member of any church. Otherwise the religion of parents would descend unto children, by the same right of inheritance as their estates, and every one would hold his faith by the same tenure he does his lands ; than which nothing can be imagined.



agined more absurd. No man by nature is bound unto any particular church or sect, but every one joins himself voluntarily to that society in which he believes he has found that profession and worship which is truly acceptable unto God. For if afterwards he discover any thing either erroneous in the doctrine, or incongruous in the worship of that society to which he has joined himself, why should it not be as free for him to go out as it was to enter? No member of a religious society can be tied with any other bonds but what proceed from a belief that God is worshipped aright. A church then is a society of members voluntarily uniting to this end.

*It follows now that we consider what is the power of this church, and unto what laws it is subject.*

Forasmuch as no society, how free soever, or upon whatsoever slight occasion instituted, (whether of philosophers, merchants, or men of leisure, for mutual conversation and discourse,) no church or company, I say, can in the least subsist and hold together, but will presently dissolve and break to pieces, unless it be regulated by some laws, and the members all consent to observe some order. Place and time of meeting must be agreed on. Rules for admitting and excluding members must be established. Distinction of officers, and putting things into a regular course, and such like, cannot be omitted. But since the joining together of several members into this church society, as has already been demonstrated, is absolutely free and spontaneous, it necessarily follows, that the right of making its laws can belong to none but the society itself; or at least

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(which is the same thing) to those whom the society by common consent has authorized thereunto.

Some perhaps may object, that no such society can be said to be a true church, unless it have in it a bishop, or presbyter, with ruling authority derived from the very apostles, and continued down unto the present times by an uninterrupted succession.

To these I answer. *In the first place*, Let them show me the edict by which Christ has imposed that law upon his church. And let not any man think me impertinent, if in a thing of this consequence, I require that the terms of that edict be very express and positive. For the promise he has made us, Mat. 18. 20. That *wheresoever two or three are gathered together in his name, he will be in the midst of them*, seems to imply the contrary. Whether such an assembly want any thing necessary to a true church, pray do you consider.

*Next*, Pray observe how great have always been the divisions amongst even those who lay so much stress upon the divine institution, and continued succession of a certain order of rulers in the church. Now their very dissention unavoidably puts us upon a necessity of deliberating, and consequently allows a liberty of choosing that which upon consideration we prefer.

*And in the last place*, I content that these men have a ruler of their church, established by such a long series of succession as they judge necessary, provided I may have liberty at the same time to join myself to that society in which I am persuaded the worshippers of God are to be found. In this manner  
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ecclesiastical liberty will be preserved on all sides, and no man will have a legislature imposed upon him, but whom himself has chosen.

But since men are so solicitous about the true church, I would only ask them, here by the way, if it be not more agreeable to the church of Christ, to make the conditions of her communion consist in such things, and such things only, as the holy spirit has in the holy scriptures declared in express words; I ask, I say, whether this be not more agreeable to the church of Christ, than for men to impose their own inventions and interpretations upon others, as if they were of divine authority; and to establish by ecclesiastical laws, as absolutely necessary to the profession of christianity, such things as the holy scriptures do either not mention, or at least not expressly command. Whosoever requires those things in order to ecclesiastical communion, which Christ does not require in order to obedience; he may perhaps indeed constitute a society accommodated to his own opinion, and his own advantage; but how that can be called the church of Christ which is established upon laws that are not his, I understand not. But this being not a proper place to enquire into the marks of the true church, I will only mind those who contend so earnestly for the decrees of their own society, and that cry out continually, the church, the church, with as much noise, and perhaps upon the same principle, as the Ephesian silversmiths did for their Diana; this, I say, I desire to mind them of, that the gospel frequently declares, that the true disciples of  
Christ

Christ must suffer persecution ; but that the church of Christ should persecute others, and force others by *fire and sword*, to embrace her faith and *doctrine*, I could never yet find in any of the books of the new-testament.

The end of a religious society is the public worship of God. All discipline ought therefore to tend to that end, and all ecclesiastical laws to be thereunto confined. Nothing ought, nor can be transacted in this society, relating to the possession of civil and worldly goods. No force is here to be made use of upon any occasion whatsoever. For force belongs wholly to the civil magistrate, and the possession of all outward goods is subject to his jurisdiction.

But it may be asked, by what means then shall ecclesiastical laws be established, if they must be thus destitute of all compulsive power ? I answer, they must be established, by means suitable to the nature of such things, whereof the external profession and observation, if not proceeding from a thorough conviction in the mind, is altogether useless and unprofitable. The arms by which the members of this society are to be kept within their duty, are exhortations, admonitions, and advices. If by these means the offenders will not be reclaimed, and the erroneous convinced, there remains nothing farther to be done, but that such stubborn and obstinate persons who give no ground to hope for their reformation, should be cast out from the society. This is the *last and utmost force* of ecclesiastical authority. No other punishment can thereby be inflicted,



inflicted, than that the relation ceasing between the body and the member which is cut off, the person so condemned ceases to be a part of that church.

These things being thus determined, let us inquire in the next place, how far the duty of toleration extends, and what is required from every one by it.

*And first,* I hold that no church is bound by the duty of toleration to retain any such person in her bosom, as after admonition, continues obstinately to offend against the laws of the society. For these being the condition of communion, and the bond of the society, if the breach of them were permitted without any rebuke or censure, the society would immediately be thereby dissolved. But nevertheless, in all such cases, care is to be taken that the sentence of excommunication, and the execution thereof, carry with it no rough usage of word or action, whereby the rejected person may any wise be damaged in body or estate. Excommunication neither does, nor can deprive the excommunicated person of any of those civil goods that he formerly possessed. All those things belong to the civil government, and are under the magistrate's protection. The whole force of excommunication consists only in this, that the resolution of the society in that respect being declared, the union that was between the body and some member comes thereby to be dissolved; and that relation ceasing, the participation of some certain things, which the society communicated to its members, and unto which no man has any civil right, comes also to cease. For  
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there is no civil injury done unto the excommunicated person, by the minister's refusing him that bread and wine, in the celebration of the Lord's Supper, which was not bought with his, but other mens money.

*Secondly*, No private person has any right, in any manner, to prejudice another person in his civil enjoyments, because he is of another church. All the rights that belong to him as a man, or as a citizen, are inviolably to be preserved to him. No injury is to be offered him, whether he be a christian or pagan. Nay, we must not content ourselves with the narrow measures of bare justice. Charity and liberality must be added to it. This the gospel enjoins; this reason directs; and this that natural fellowship we are born into requires of us. If any man err from the right way, it is his own misfortune, no injury to thee: nor therefore art thou to punish him in the things of this life, because thou supposest he will be miserable in that which is to come.

What I say concerning the mutual toleration of private persons differing from one another in religion, I understand also of particular churches; which stand as it were in the same relation to each other as private persons among themselves; nor has any one of them any manner of jurisdiction over any other, no not even when the civil magistrate (as it some times happens) comes to be of this or the other communion. For the civil government can give no new right to the church, nor the church to the civil government. So that whether the magistrate  
join



join himself to any church, or separate from it, the church remains always as it was before, a free and voluntary society. It neither acquires the power of the sword by the magistrate's coming to it, nor does it lose the right of instruction and excommunication by his going from it. This is the fundamental and immutable right of a spontaneous society; that it has power to remove any of its members who transgress the rules of its institution. But it cannot by the accession of any new members, acquire any right of jurisdiction over those that are not joined with it. And therefore peace, equity and friendship, are always mutually to be observed by particular churches, in the same manner as by private persons, without any pretence of superiority over one another.

That the thing may be made yet clearer by an example; let us suppose two churches, the one of Arminians, the other of Calvinists, residing in the city of Constantinople; will any one say, that either of these churches has a right to deprive the members of the other of their estates and liberty, because of their differing from it in some doctrines or ceremonies; whilst the Turks in the mean while silently stand by, and laugh to see with what inhuman cruelty Christians thus rage against Christians? But if one of these churches hath this power of treating the other ill, I ask which of them it is to whom that power belongs, and by what right? It will be answered, undoubtedly, that it is the orthodox church which has the right of authority over the erroneous or heretical. This is in great & specious words, to say just nothing at all. For every church is ortho-  
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dox to itself ; to others, erroneous or heretical. Whatsoever any church believes, it believes to be true ; and the contrary thereunto it pronounces to be error. So that the controversy between these churches about the truth of their doctrines, and the purity of their worship, is on both sides equal ; not is there any judge, either at Constantinople, or elsewhere upon earth, by whose sentence it can be determined. The decision of that question belongs only to the Supreme Judge of all men. In the mean while let those men consider how heinously they sin ; who, adding injustice to their pride, do rashly and arrogantly take upon them to misuse the servants of another master, who are not at all accountable to them.

Nay further, if it could be manifest which of these two dissenting churches were in the right way, there would not accrue thereby to the orthodox any right of destroying the other. For churches as such, have not any jurisdiction in worldly matters nor are fire and sword any proper instruments wherewith to convince mens minds of error, and inform them of the truth. *Let us suppose that the civil magistrate inclined to favor one of them, put his sword into their hands ; that (by his consent) they might chastise the dissenters as they pleased.* Will any man say, that it can be the Christian church from a Turkish emperor ? An infidel, who has himself no authority to punish christians, cannot confer such an authority upon any society of christians, nor give unto them a right which he has not himself. This would be the case at Constantinople. And the reasons are the



the same as in any christian kingdom. The civil power is the same in every place; nor can that power in the hands of a christian prince, confer any greater authority upon the church, than in the hands of a heathen; which is to say, just none at all.

Nevertheless, it is worthy to be observed, and lamented, that the opposers of errors, & the exclaimers against schism, do hardly ever let loose this their *zeal for God*, with which they are so warmed and inflamed, unless where they have the civil magistrate on their side. But so soon as court favor has given them the better end of the staff, and they begin to feel themselves the stronger, then peace and charity are to be laid aside; otherwise, they are religiously to be observed. Where they have not the power to carry on persecution, and to become masters, they desire to live upon fair terms, and preach up toleration. When they are not strengthened with the civil power, then they can bear most patiently the contagion of idolatry, superstition and heresy in their neighborhood; of which, in other occasions, the interest of religion makes them to be extremely apprehensive. They do not soon attack those errors which are in fashion at court, or are countenanced by the government. Here they can be content to spare their arguments; which yet (with their leave) is the only right method of propagating truth; which has no such way of prevailing, as when strong arguments and good reason are joined with the softness of civility and good usage.

*No body* therefore, in fine, neither single persons nor churches, nay, nor even commonwealths, have

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any just title to invade the civil rights and worldly goods of each other upon pretence of religion. Those that are of another opinion, would do well to consider with themselves how pernicious a seed of discord and war, how powerful a provocation to endless hatreds, rapines and slaughters, they thereby furnish unto mankind. No peace and security, no not so much as common friendship, can ever be established or preserved among men, so long as this opinion prevails, that *dominion is founded in grace*, and that religion is to be propagated by force of arms.

*In the third place,* Let us see what the *duty of toleration requires* from those who are in *ecclesiastical character and office*, whether they be bishops, priests, presbyters, ministers, or however else dignified or distinguished. That whence-soever their authority be sprung, since it is ecclesiastical, it ought to be confined within the bounds of the church, nor can it in any manner be extended to civil affairs; because the church itself is a thing absolutely separate and distinct from the commonwealth. The boundaries on both sides are fixed and immoveable. He jumbles heaven and earth together who mixes these societies; which are in their original end and business, perfectly distinct from each other. No man therefore, with whatsoever ecclesiastical office he be dignified, can deprive another man that is not of his church and faith, either of liberty or of any part of his worldly goods, upon the account of that difference which is between them in religion. For whatever is not lawful to the whole church, cannot  
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by any ecclesiastical right, become lawful to any of its members.

*But this is not all.* It is not enough that ecclesiastical men abstain from violence. He that pretends to be a successor of the apostles, and takes upon him the office of teaching, is obliged also to admonish his hearers of the duties of peace and good will towards all men; as well the erroneous, as the orthodox; towards those who differ from them in faith and worship, as well as towards those who agree with them therein. And he ought industriously to exhort all men, whether private persons or magistrates, to charity and meekness; and diligently endeavor to allay all that heat and unreasonable aversion of mind, which any man's fiery zeal for his own sect, or the craft of others, has kindled against dissenters. I will not undertake to represent how happy would be the fruit, both in church and state, if the pulpits every where sounded with this doctrine of peace and toleration; lest I should seem to reflect too severely upon those men whose dignity I desire not to speak ill of, nor would have it diminished either by others or themselves. *But this I say, that this it ought to be.* And if any one who professes himself to be a minister of the word of God, a preacher of the gospel of peace, teach otherwise, he understands not the business of his calling, and shall one day give account thereof unto the Prince of Peace. If christians are to be admonished that they abstain from all manner of revenge, even after repeated provocations and multiplied injuries; how much more ought they who  
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suffer nothing, forbear violence, and abstain from all manner of ill usage towards those from whom they have received none. This caution and temper they ought certainly to use towards those who mind their own business, and are solicitous for nothing, but that they may worship God in that manner which they are persuaded is acceptable to him. In private affairs, in the management of estates, in the preservation of bodily health, every man may consider what suits his own conveniency, and follow what course he likes best. No man is angry with another for an error committed in sowing his land. Let any man pull down, or build, or make whatsoever expences he pleases, nobody murmurs, nor controuls him; he has his liberty. But if any man do not frequent the church; if *he* do not conform his behavior exactly to the accustomed ceremonies, or if *he* brings not his children to be initiated in the sacred mysteries of this or the other congregation; *this* immediately causes an uproar; and the neighborhood is filled with noise and clamour. Every one is ready to be the avenger of so great a crime. And the zealots hardly have patience to refrain from violence till the cause be heard, and the poor man be condemned to the loss of liberty, goods, or life. Oh that our ecclesiastical orators, of every sect, would apply themselves with all the strength of arguments that they are able, to the confounding of mens errors! But let them spare their persons. Let them not supply their wants of reasons with the instruments of force, which belong to another jurisdiction, and do ill become a professor of christianity.



tiadity. Let them not call in the magistrate's authority to the aid of their eloquence or learning; lest, perhaps, whilst they pretend only love for the truth, their intemperate zeal, breathing fire and sword, and so betrays their ambition; and show that what they desire is *temporal dominion*. For it will be very difficult to persuade men of sense, that he, who with dry eyes, and satisfaction of mind, can deliver his brother unto the executioner, to be burnt alive, does heartily concern himself to save that brother from the flames of hell in the world to come.

*In the last place.* Let us now consider *what is the magistrates duty* in the business of toleration, which certainly is very considerable.

We have already proved, that the care of souls does not belong to the magistrate. But a charitable care, which consists in teaching, admonishing, and persuading, cannot be denied unto any man. The care therefore of every man's soul belongs unto himself, and is to be left unto himself. But now if I be marching on with my utmost vigor, in that way which, according to geography, leads straight to Jerusalem; why am I beaten and illused by others, because, perhaps, I wear not buskins; because my hair is not of the right cut; because I avoid certain by-ways, which seem unto me to lead into briars or precipices; because amongst the several paths that are in the same road, I choose that to walk in which seems to be the straightest and cleanest; because I avoid to keep company with some travellers that are less grave, and others that  
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are more four than they ought to be; or in fact, because I follow a guide that either is, or is not clothed in white, and crowned with a miter? Certainly, if we consider right, we shall find that for the most part they are such frivolous things as these, that might either be observed or omitted; I say they are such like things as these, which breed implacable enmities amongst christian brethren, who are all agreed in the substantial and fundamental part of religion.

But let us grant unto these zealots, who condemn all things that are not of their mode. There is only one of those which is the true way to eternal happiness. But in this great variety of ways that men follow, it is still doubted which is this right one. Now neither the care of the commonwealth, nor the right of enacting laws, does discover this way that leads to heaven more certainly to the magistrate, than every private man's search and study discovers it unto himself. Those things that every man ought sincerely to enquire into himself, and by meditation, search, and his own endeavors, attain the knowledge of, cannot be looked upon as the peculiar possession of any sort of men. Princes indeed are born superior unto other men in power, but in nature equal. Neither the right, nor the art of ruling, does necessarily carry along with it the certain knowledge of other things; and least of all the true religion. For if it were so, how could it come to pass that the lords of the earth should differ so vastly as they do in religious matters? But let us grant that it is probable the way to eternal life



life may be better known by a *prince* than by his *subjects*; or at least, that in this uncertainty of things, the safest and most commodious way for private persons is to follow his dictates. You will say, *what then?* If he should bid you follow merchandise for your livelihood, would you decline that course for fear it should not succeed? *I answer*, I would turn merchant upon the prince's command; because in case I should have ill success in trade, he is able to make up my loss some other way. But this is not the case in the things that regard the life to come. If there I take a wrong course, in that respect I am at once undone; it is not in the magistrates power to repair my loss, to ease my sufferings, or to restore me in any measure. *What security can be given for the kingdom of heaven?*

Perhaps some will say that they do not suppose this *infallible judgment* to be in the civil magistrate, but in the church. *What the church has determined, that the civil magistrate orders to be observed; and he provides by his authority that no body shall either act or believe, in the business of religion, otherwise than the church teaches.*

*The Magistrate himself yields obedience thereunto, and requires the like obedience from others.* I answer; who sees not how frequently the name of the church which was so venerable in the time of the apostles, has been made use of to throw dust in peoples eyes, in following ages? But however, in the present case it helps us not. The one only narrow way which leads to heaven is not better known to the magistrate than to private persons; and therefore I cannot

cannot safely take him for my guide, who may probably be as ignorant of the way as myself, and who certainly is less concerned for my salvation, than I myself am. Amongst so many kings of the Jews, how many of them were there whom any Israelite, thus blindly following, had not fallen into idolatry, and destruction? Yet nevertheless, you bid me be of good courage, and tell me that all is now safe and secure, because the magistrate does not enjoin the observance of his own decrees in matters of religion, but only the decrees of the church. Of what church I beseech you? Of that certainly which he likes best. *As if he that compels me by laws and penalties to enter into this or the other church, did not interpose his own judgment in the matter.* What difference is there whether he lead me himself, or deliver me over to be led by others? I depend both ways upon his will. I am doubtful concerning the doctrine of the Socinians, I am suspicious of the way of worship practised by the Papists, or Lutherans. Will it be a jot the safer for me to join either unto the one or the other of those churches, upon the magistrates command; because he commands nothing in religion but by the authority of the church?

But to speak the truth, we must acknowledge that the church is for the most part more apt to be influenced by the court, than the court by the church. The English history affords us fresh examples, in the reigns of Henry the 8th, Edward the 6th, Mary, and Elizabeth, how easily the clergy changed their decrees, their articles of faith, their  
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form of worship, and every thing, according to the inclination of those Kings and Queens. Yet were those Kings and Queens of such different minds, in point of religion, and enjoined thereupon such different things, that no man in his wits (I had almost said none but an Atheist) will presume to say that any upright worshipper of God could, with a safe conscience, obey their several decrees. To conclude. It is the same thing whether a King that prescribes laws to another man's religion, pretend to do it by his own judgment, or by the ecclesiastical authority and advice of others. The decisions of churchmen, whose differences and disputes are sufficiently known, cannot be any sounder or safer than *his*. Nor can all their suffrages joined together add any new strength unto the civil power. Though this also must be taken notice of, that princes seldom have any regard to the suffrages of ecclesiastics that are not favorers of their own faith and way of worship.

But after all, the *principal consideration*, and which absolutely determines this controversy, is this. Although the magistrates opinion in religion be sound, and the way that he appoints be truly evangelical, yet if I be not thoroughly persuaded thereof in my own mind, there will be no safety for me in following it. No way whatsoever that I shall walk in, against the dictates of my conscience, will ever bring me to the mansions of the blessed. I may grow rich by an art that I take no delight in ; I may be cured of some disease by remedies that I have not faith in ; but I cannot be saved by a reli-

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gion that I distrust, and by a worship that I abhor. It is in vain for an unbeliever to take up the outward show of another man's profession. Faith and good works only, and sincerity inwardly, are the things that procure acceptance with God. In a word, whatsoever may be doubtful in religion, which I believe not to be true, can be neither true or profitable unto me. In vain therefore do princes compel their subjects to come into their church-communion, under pretence of saving their souls. If they *believe*, they will come of their own accord; if they *believe not*, their coming will not avail them. How great soever may be the pretence of good-will and charity, and concern for the salvation of mens souls, men cannot be forced to be saved whether they will or no. And therefore, when all is done, they must be left to their own consciences.

Having thus at length freed men from all dominion over each other in matters of religion, let us now consider *what they are to do*. All men know and acknowledge that God ought to be publicly worshipped. Men therefore constituted in this liberty should enter into some religious society; that they may meet together, not only for mutual edification, but for the worship of God, and to offer unto his divine Majesty such service as they themselves are not ashamed of; and finally, that by the holiness of life, and decent form of worship, they may draw others unto the love of the true religion, and perform such other things in religion as cannot be done by each private man apart.

*These*



*These religious societies I call churches, and these I say the magistrate ought to tolerate.* For the business of these assemblies of the people is nothing but what is lawful for every man in particular to take care of. Nor in this case is there any difference between the national church, and other separated congregations. But as in every church there are two things especially to be considered; *the outward form and rites of worship; and the doctrines and articles of faith*; these things must be handled each distinctly; that so the whole matter of toleration may the more clearly be understood.

Concerning *outward worship*, the magistrate has no power to enforce by law; either in his own church, or much less in another, the use of any rites or ceremonies whatsoever in the worship of God. And this; not only because these churches are free societies; but because whatsoever is practised in the worship of God, is only so far justifiable as it is believed by those who practice it to be acceptable unto him. Whatsoever is not done with that assurance of faith, is neither well in itself, nor can it be acceptable to God. To impose such things therefore upon any people, contrary to their own judgment, is in essence to command them to offend God; and considering that the end of all religion is to please him, and that liberty is essentially necessary to that end, the force of *civil law* in ceremonies, appears to be absurd beyond expression.

But perhaps it may be concluded from hence, that I deny unto the magistrate all manner of power about *indifferent things*; which, if it be not granted

granted, the whole subject matter of law-making is taken away. No, I readily grant that indifferent things, and perhaps none but such are subjected to the legislative power. But it does not therefore follow, that the magistrate may ordain *whatsoever he pleases* concerning any thing that is indifferent. The public good is the rule and measure of all law-making. If a thing be not useful to the commonwealth, though it be never so indifferent, it may not therefore be established by law.

*But further :* Things never so indifferent in their own nature, when they are brought into the worship of God, are removed out of the reach of the magistrates jurisdiction; because in that use they have no connexion at all with civil affairs. The only business of the church is the worship of God. And it no ways concerns the commonwealth, or any member of it, that *this* or the *other* ceremony be there made use of. Neither the use nor the omission of any ceremonies in those religious assemblies, does either advantage or prejudice the life or estate of any man. For example : let it be granted, that the washing of an infant with water is in itself an indifferent thing. Let it be granted also, that if the magistrate understand such washing to be profitable to the curing or preventing of any disease that children are subject unto, and esteem the matter weighty enough to be taken care of by a law, in that case he may order it to be done. But will any one say, that a magistrate has the same right to ordain by law, that all children shall be baptized by priests, in the sacred font ? The extreme difference of these  
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two cases is visible to every one at first sight. Or let us apply the last case to the *child* of a Jew, and the thing will speak itself. For what hinders but a christian magistrate may have subjects that are Jews? Now if we acknowledge that such an injury may not be done unto a Jew, as to compel him, against his own faith, to practice in religion a thing that is in its nature indifferent; how can we maintain that any thing of this kind may be done to a christian?

*Again.* Things in their own nature indifferent, cannot by any human authority, be made any part of the worship of God, for this very reason, because they are indifferent. For since indifferent things are not capable, by any virtue of their own to propitiate the Deity; no human power or authority can confer on them so much dignity and excellency, as to enable them to do it. In the common affairs of life that use of indifferent things which God has not forbidden, is free and lawful: and therefore in those things civil authority has place. But it is not so in matters of religion. Things indifferent are not otherwise lawful in the worship of God than as they are instituted by God himself; and as he by some positive command, has ordained them to be made a part of that worship which he will accept at the hands of poor sinful men. Nor when an incensed Deity shall ask us, *Who has required these things at your hands?* will it be enough to answer him, that the magistrate commanded them. If civil jurisdiction extended so far, what might not lawfully be introduced into religion? What confusion of ceremonies, what superstitious inventions, built  
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upon the magistrates authority, might not be imposed upon the worshippers of God? For the greatest part of these ceremonies and superstitions consist in the religious use of such things as are in their own nature indifferent; nor are they sinful upon any other account than because God is not the author of them. The sprinkling of water, and the use of bread and wine, are both in their own nature; and in the ordinary occasions of life, altogether indifferent. Will any man therefore say that these things could have been introduced into religion, and made a part of divine worship, if not by divine institution? If any human authority or civil power could have done this; why might it not also enjoin the eating of fish, and the drinking of ale, in the holy banquet, as a part of divine worship? Why not the sprinkling of the blood of beasts in churches, and expiations by water or fire? But these things, how indifferent soever they be in common uses; when they come to be annexed unto divine worship, without divine authority, they are as abominable to God, as the sacrifice of a dog. And why a dog so abominable? What difference is there between a dog and a goat, unless it be that God required the use of the one in his worship, and not of the other? We see therefore that indifferent things, how much soever they be under the power of the civil magistrate, yet cannot upon that pretence be introduced into, and imposed upon religious assemblies; because in the worship of God they wholly cease to be indifferent. He that worships God, does it with design to please him. But that cannot be done by him,



him, who, upon the command of another, offers unto God that which he knows will be displeasing to him, because not commanded by himself. This is not to please God, or appease his wrath, but willingly and knowingly to provoke him, by a manifest contempt; which is a thing absolutely repugnant to the nature and end of worship.

But it will be here asked, *If nothing belonging to divine worship be left to human discretion, how is it then that churches themselves have the power of ordering any thing about the time and place of worship, and the like?* To this I answer, that in religious worship we must distinguish between what is part of the worship itself, and what is but a circumstance. That is a part of the worship which is believed to be appointed by God, and therefore is necessary. Circumstances are such things which, though in general they cannot be separated from worship, yet the particular instances or modifications of them are not determined; and therefore they are indifferent. Of this sort are the *time* and *place* of worship, the *habit* and *posture* of them who worship. These are circumstances, and perfectly indifferent where God has not given any express command about them. For example; among the Jews the time and place of their worship, and the habits of those that officiated in it, were not meer circumstances, but a part of the worship itself; in which if any thing were defective, or different from the institution, they could not hope that it would be accepted by God. But these to christians under the liberty of the gospel, are meer circumstances of worship, which the prudence

dence of every church may bring into such use as shall be judged most subservient to the end of order, decency and edification. Though even under the gospel also, those who believe the first or the seventh day to be set apart by God, and consecrated still to his worship, to them that portion of time is not a simple circumstance, but a real part of divine worship, which can neither be changed nor neglected.

*In the next place,* As the magistrate has no power to *impose* by his laws, the use of ceremonies in any church, so neither has he any power to forbid the use of such ceremonies as are already received, approved, and practised by any church. Because if he did so, he would destroy the church itself, the end of whose institution is only to worship God with freedom, after its own manner.

You will say, by this rule if some congregations should have a mind to *sacrifice infants*, or *lustfully pollute themselves in promiscuous uncleanness*, or practice any other such heinous enormities, *is the magistrate obliged to tolerate them*, because they are practised in a religious assembly? I answer, no. These things are not lawful in the ordinary course of life, nor in any private house; and therefore neither are they so in the worship of God, or in any religious meeting. But indeed if any people congregated upon account of religion, should be desirous to sacrifice a calf, I deny that *that* ought to be prohibited by a law. Melibæus, whose calf it is, may lawfully kill his own calf at home, and burn any part of it that he thinks fit. For no injury is thereby done to any one, no prejudice to another man's



man's goods. And for the same reason he may kill his calf also in a religious meeting. Whether the doing so be well-pleasing to God or no, it is their part to consider that do it. And thus what may be spent on a feast may be spent on a sacrifice. But if peradventure such were the state of things, that the interest of the commonwealth required all slaughter of beasts should be forboren for a certain time, in order to the increasing of the stock of cattle, that had been destroyed by some extraordinary murrain; who sees not that the magistrate, in such a case, may forbid all his subjects to kill calves for any use whatsoever? Only 'tis to be observed, that in this case the law is not made about a religious, but a political matter; nor is the sacrifice, but the *slaughter* of calves thereby prohibited.

By this we see what difference there is between the church and the commonwealth. Whatsoever is lawful in the commonwealth, cannot be prohibited by the magistrate in the church. Whatsoever is permitted unto any one of his subjects for their ordinary use neither can, nor ought to be forbidden by him to any sect of people for their religious uses. If any man may lawfully take bread or wine, either sitting or kneeling, in his own house, the law ought not to abridge him of the same liberty in his religious worship; tho' in the church the use of bread and wine be very different, and be there applied to the mysteries of faith, and divine worship.

It may be said; *What if a church be idolatrous, is that also to be tolerated by the magistrate?* In answer, I ask; what power can be given to the magistrate

gistrate for the suppression of an idolatrous church, which may not, in time and place, be made use of to the ruin of an orthodox one? For it must be remembered that the civil power is the same every where, and the religion of every prince is orthodox to himself. If therefore such a power be granted unto the civil magistrate in spirituals, as that at Geneva (for example) he may extirpate, by violence, the religion which is there reputed idolatrous; by the same rule another magistrate, in some neighbouring country, may oppress the reformed religion; and, in Turkey, the christian. The civil power can either change every thing in religion, according to the prince's pleasure, or it can change nothing. If it be once permitted to introduce any thing into religion, by the means of laws and penalties, there can be no bounds put to it; but it will in the same manner be lawful to alter every thing, according to that rule of truth which the magistrate has framed unto himself. No man whatsoever ought therefore to be deprived of his earthly enjoyments, upon account of his religion. Not even Turks, subjected unto a christian prince, are to be punished either in body or goods, for not embracing our faith and worship. If they are persuaded that they please God in observing the rites of their own country, and that they shall obtain happiness by that means, they are to be left unto God and themselves. Let us trace this matter to the bottom. *Thus it is.* An inconsiderable and weak number of christians, destitute of every thing, arrive in a pagan country. These foreigners beseech the inhabitants, by the  
bowels



Bowels of humanity, that they would succour them with the necessaries of life. Those necessaries are given them; habitations are granted; and they all join together, and grow up into one body of people. The christian religion by this means takes root in that country, and spreads itself; but does not suddenly grow the strongest. While things are in this condition, peace, friendship, faith, and equal justice, are preserved amongst them. At length the magistrate becomes a christian, and by that means their party becomes the most powerful. Then immediately all compacts are to be broken, all civil rights to be violated, that idolatry may be extirpated; and unless these innocent pagans, strict observers of the rules of equity and of the law of nature, and no ways offending against the laws of the society, I say unless they will forsake their ancient religion, and embrace a new and strange one, they are to be turned out of the lands and possessions of their forefathers, and perhaps deprived of life itself. Then at last it appears what zeal for the church, joined with the desire of *dominion*, is capable to produce; and how easily the pretence of religion, serves for a cloak to covetousness, rapine and slaughter.

Now whosoever maintains that idolatry is to be rooted out of any place by laws, punishments, fire, and sword, may apply this story to himself. For the reason of the thing is equal, both in Turkey, America, and Europe. And neither pagans there, nor any dissenting christians here, can with any right be deprived of their worldly goods: nor are any

civil rights to be either changed or violated upon account of religion in one place more than another.

But *idolatry* (say some) *is a sin*, and therefore not to be *tolerated*. If they said, it were therefore to be *avoided*; the inference were good. But it does not follow, that because it is a sin, it ought therefore to be punished by the magistrate. For it does not belong unto the magistrate to make use of his sword in punishing every thing, indifferently; that he takes to be a sin against God. Covetousness, impenitency, uncharitableness, and many other things are sins, by the consent of all men, which yet no man ever said were to be punished by the magistrate. The reason is, because they are not prejudicial to other mens rights, nor do they break the public peace of societies. Nay, even the sins of lying, and perjury, are no where punishable by laws; unless in certain cases, in which the real turpitude of the thing is evident, and where the offence against God, are not considered, but only the injury done unto our neighbours, and to the commonwealth. And what if in another country, to a pagan prince, the christian religion seem false and offensive to God; may not the christians, for the same reason, and after the same manner, be extirpated there?

But it may be urged further, *that by the law of Moses, idolaters were to be rooted out*. True indeed, by the law of *Moses*: but that is not obligatory to us christians. No body pretends that every thing generally, enjoined by the law of *Moses*, ought to be practised by christians. But there is nothing more frivolous than that common distinction of *moral*,  
*judicial*



*Judicial* and *ceremonial* law, which men ordinarily make use of. For no positive law, whatsoever, can oblige any people, but those to whom it is given. *Hear O Israel*; sufficiently restrains the obligation of the law of *Moses* only to that people: and this consideration alone is answer enough unto those that urge the authority of the law of *Moses*; for the inflicting of capital punishments upon idolaters. But however, I will examine this argument a little more particularly.

The case of idolaters, in respect of the *Jewish* commonwealth, falls under a double consideration. The first is, of those who, being initiated in the *Mosaical* rites, and made citizens of that commonwealth, did afterwards apostatize from the worship of the God of *Israel*. These were proceeded against as traitors and rebels, guilty of no less than *high treason*. For the commonwealth of the *Jews*, different in that from all others, it was absolute *Theocracy*; nor was there or could there be, any difference between that commonwealth and the church. The laws established there concerning the worship of one invisible Deity, were the *civil laws* of that people, and a part of their *political government*; in which God himself was the legislator. Now if any one can shew me where there is a commonwealth, at this time, constituted upon that foundation, I will acknowledge that the ecclesiastical laws do there unavoidably become a part of the *civil*, and that the subjects of that government both may, and ought to be kept in strict conformity with that church, by the *civil power*. But there is absolutely

ly no such thing, under the gospel, as a christian commonwealth. There are, indeed, many cities and kingdoms that have professedly embraced the faith of Christ; but they have retained their ancient form of government; with which the law of Christ hath not at all meddled. *He*, indeed, hath taught men how, by faith and good works, they may attain eternal life. But he instituted no commonwealth. *He* prescribed unto his followers no peculiar form of government; nor put *he* the sword into any magistrate's hand, with commission to make use of it in forcing men to forsake their former religion, and receive *his*.

Secondly, foreigners, and such as were strangers to the commonwealth of Israel, were not compelled by force to observe the rites of the *Mosaical* law. But, on the contrary, in the very same place, where it is ordered, that an *Israelite*, that was an idolater, should be put to death, there it is provided, that strangers should not be vexed nor oppressed. *Exod.* 22. 20, 21. I confess, that the seven nations, that possess the land which was promised to the *Israelites*, were utterly to be cut off. But this was not singly because they were idolaters. For, if that had been the reason; why were the *Moabites*, and other nations to be spared? No, the reason is this. God being in a peculiar manner the king of the *Jews*, he could not suffer the adoration of any other Deity, (which was properly an act of high treason against himself) in the land of *Canaan*, which was his kingdom. For such a manifest revolt could no ways consist with his dominion which



was perfectly political, in that country. All idolatry was therefore to be rooted out of the bounds of his kingdom; because it was an acknowledgment of another God; that is to say, another *king*; against the laws of his empire. The inhabitants were also to be driven out, that the entire possession of the land might be given to the *Israelites*.

Amongst so many captives taken, so many nations reduced under their obedience, we find not one man forced into the Jewish religion, and the worship of the true God; and punished for idolatry; though all of them were certainly guilty of it. If any one indeed, becoming a proselyte, desired to be made a citizen of their commonwealth, he was obliged to submit unto their laws; that is, to embrace their religion. But this he did willingly, on his own accord, not by constraint, and solicited for it as a privilege; and as soon as he was admitted, he became subject to the laws of the commonwealth; by which all idolatry was forbidden within the borders of the land of Canaan. But that law (as I have said) did not reach to any of those regions, however subjected unto the Jews, that were situated without those bounds.

Thus far concerning outward worship. Let us now consider *articles of faith*.

The *articles* of religion are some of them *practical*, and some *speculative*. Now, though both sorts consist in the knowledge of truth, yet these terminate simply in the understanding, those influence the will and manners. Speculative opinions, therefore, and *articles of faith* (as they are called) cannot be imposed

imposed on any church by the law of the land, For it is absurd that things should be enjoined by laws, which are not in mens power to perform. And to believe this or that to be true, does not depend upon our will. But of this enough has been said already. But (will some say) let men at least profess that they believe. *A sweet religion indeed, that obliges men to tell lies* both to God and man. If the magistrate thinks to save men thus, he seems to understand little of the way of salvation. And if he does it not in order to save them, why is he so sollicitous about the articles of faith as to enact them by a law?

*Further.* The Magistrate ought not to forbid the preaching or professing of any speculative opinions in any church, because they have no manner of relation to the civil rights of the subjects. If a Roman Catholic believe *that* to be really the body of Christ, which another man calls bread, he does no injury thereby to his neighbor. If a Jew do not believe the Newtestament to be the word of God, he does not thereby alter any thing in mens civil rights. If a heathen doubt of both testaments, he is not therefore to be punished as a pernicious citizen. The power of the magistrate, and the estates of the people, may be equally secure, whether any man believe these things or no. I readily grant, that these opinions are false & absurd. But the business of laws is not to provide for the truth of opinions, but for the safety and security of the commonwealth, and of every particular mans goods and person. And so it ought to be. For truth *certainly,*



certainly would do well enough, if she were once left to shift for herself. She seldom has received, and I fear never will receive, much assistance from the civil power. She is not taught by laws, nor has she any need of force to procure her entrance into the minds of men. Errors indeed prevail by the assistance of foreign and borrowed succors. But if truth makes not her way into the understanding by her own light, she will be but the weaker for any borrowed force; violence cannot add to her. Thus much for speculative opinions. Let us now proceed to *practical* ones.

*A good life*, in which consists not the least part of religion and true piety, strengthens also the civil government; and in it lies religion and civil safety. *Moral actions* belong therefore to the jurisdiction both of the outward and inward; both of the civil and domestick; I mean, a good life, the evidence of religion, which will at least include civility. Here therefore is great danger, lest one of these jurisdictions intrude upon the other, and discord arise between the keeper of the public peace, and the laws of the church. But if what has been already said concerning the limits of both those governments be rightly considered, it will easily remove all difficulty in this matter.

Every man has an immortal soul, capable of eternal happiness or misery; whose happiness depending upon his believing. It follows from thence, 1<sup>st</sup>. That the observance of these things is the highest obligation that lies upon mankind, and that our utmost care and diligence, ought to be exercised

in the search and performance of them ; because there is nothing in this world that is of any consideration in comparison with eternity spent in the worship of God. *2dly.* That seeing one man does not violate the right of another, by his erroneous opinions, and undue manner of worship, nor is his perdition any way prejudicial to other mens affairs ; therefore the care of each mans salvation belongs only to himself. But I would not have this understood, as if I meant hereby to condemn all charitable admonitions, and affectionate endeavors to reduce men from errors ; which are indeed the greatest duty of a christian. Any one may employ as many exhortations and arguments as he pleases, towards the promoting of another man's salvation. But all force and compulsion are to be forborn. Nothing is to be done compulsively. No body is obliged in that matter to yield obedience unto the admonitions or injunctions of another, further than he himself is persuaded. Every man, in that, has the supreme and absolute authority of judging for himself. And the reason is, because no body else is concerned in it, nor can receive any prejudice from his conduct therein.

But besides their souls, which are immortal, men have also their temporal lives here upon earth ; the state whereof being frail and fleeting, and the duration uncertain ; they have need of several outward conveniences to the support thereof, which are to be procured or preserved by pains and industry. But the depravity of mankind being such, that they had rather injuriously prey upon the fruits of other mens labours,



labours, than take pains to provide for themselves; the necessity of preserving men in the possession of what honest industry has already acquired; and also of preserving their liberty and strength, whereby they may acquire what they further want; obliges men to enter into society with one another; that by mutual assistance, and joint force, they may secure unto each other their properties, in the things that contribute to the comfort and happiness of this life; leaving in the mean while to every man the care of his own eternal happiness, the attainment whereof can neither be facilitated by another man's industry, nor can the loss of it turn to another man's hurt, nor the hope of it be forced from him by any external violence. But forasmuch as men thus entering into societies, grounded upon their mutual compacts of assistance, for the defence of their temporal goods, may nevertheless be deprived of them, either by the rapine and fraud of their fellow citizens, or by the hostile violence of foreigners; the remedy of this evil consists in arms, riches, and a multitude of citizens; the remedy of the other in laws; and the care of all things relating both to the one and the other, is committed by the society to the civil magistrate. This is the *original*, this is the *use* and these are the *bounds* of the legislative power, in every commonwealth. I mean, that provision may be made for the security of each man's private possessions; for the peace, riches, and public commodities of the whole people; and as much as possible, for the increase of their inward strength, against foreign invasions.

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These things being thus explained, it is easy to understand to what end the legislative power ought to be directed, and by what measures regulated; and that is the temporal good and outward prosperity of the society, which is the sole reason of men's entering into society, and the only thing they seek and aim at in it. And it is also evident what liberty remains to men in reference to their eternal salvation; and that is, that every one should do what he in his conscience is persuaded to be acceptable to the Almighty, on whose good pleasure and acceptance depends his eternal happiness. For obedience is due in the first place to God, and afterwards to the laws.

But some may ask, *What if the magistrate should enjoin any thing by his authority that appears unlawful to the conscience of a private person?* I answer, That if government be faithfully administered, & the counsels of the magistrate be indeed directed to the public good, this will seldom happen. But if perhaps it do so fall out; I say, that such a private person is to abstain from the action that he judges lawful; and he is to undergo the punishment, which it is not unjust for him to bear. For the private judgment of any person concerning a law enacted in political matters, for the public good does not take away the obligation of that law, nor deserve a dispensation. But if the law indeed be concerning things that lie not within the verge of the magistrate's authority; (as for example, that the people, or any party amongst them, should be compelled to embrace a strange religion, and join in the worship and ceremonies



monies of another church,) men are not in these cases obliged by that law, against their consciences. For the political society is instituted for no other end but only to secure every man's possession of the things of this life. The care of each man's soul, and of the things of heaven, which neither does belong to the commonwealth; nor can be *subjected* to it, is left entirely to every man's self. Thus the safeguard of men's lives, and of the things that belong unto this life, is the business of the commonwealth; and the preserving of those things unto their owners is the duty of the magistrate. And therefore the magistrate cannot take away these worldly things from *this* man, or party, and give them to *that*; nor change property amongst fellow subjects, (no not even by law) for any cause that has no relation to the end of civil government; I mean, for their religion; which whether it be true or false, does no hurt to the worldly concerns of their fellow-subjects, which are the things that only belong unto the care of the commonwealth.

*But what if the magistrate believe such a law as this to be for the public good?* I answer: As the private judgment of any particular person, if erroneous, does not exempt him from the obligation of law, so the private judgment (as I may call it) of the magistrate does not give him any new right of imposing laws upon his subjects; which neither was *in the constitution* of the government granted him, nor ever was in the *power* of the people to grant; and least of all, if he make it his business to enrich and advance his followers and fellow-sectaries, with the spoils

spoils of others. *But what if the magistrate believe that he has a right to make such laws, and that they are for the public good; and his subjects believe the contrary? Who shall be judge between them?* I answer, God alone. For there is no judge upon earth between the Supreme Magistrate and the people. God, I say, is the only Judge in this case, who will reward unto every one at the last day according to his deserts; that is, according to his sincerity and uprightness, in endeavoring to promote piety, and the public weal and peace of Mankind. *But what shall be done in the meanwhile?* I answer: The principal and chief care of every one ought to be of his own soul first, and which is strictly consistent with the public peace.

There are two sorts of contests amongst men, the one managed by law, the other by force; and they are of that nature, that where the one ends, the other always begins. But it is not my business to enquire into the power of the magistrate in the different constitutions of nations. I only know what usually happens where controversies arise, without a judge to determine them. You will say then the magistrate being the stronger will have his will, and carry his point. Without doubt. But the question is not here concerning the doubtfulness of the event, but the *rule of right*.

But to come to particulars. I say, *First*, no opinions contrary to human society, or to those moral rules which are necessary to the preservation of civil society, are to be tolerated by the magistrate. But of these, examples in any church are rare.

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For no sect can easily arrive to such a degree of madness, as that it should think fit to teach, for doctrines of religion, such things as manifestly undermine the foundations of society, and are therefore condemned by the judgment of all mankind: because their own interest, peace, reputation, every thing, would be thereby endangered.

Another more secret evil, but more dangerous to the commonwealth, is, when men arrogate to themselves, and to those of their own sect, some peculiar prerogative, covered over with a specious shew of deceitful words. but in effect opposite to the civil right of the community. For example. We cannot find any sect that teaches expressly, and openly, that men are not obliged to keep their *promise*; that princes may be dethroned by those that differ from them in *religion*; or that the dominion of all things belongs only to *themselves*. For these things, proposed thus nakedly and plainly, would soon draw on them the eye and hand of the magistrate, and awaken all the care of the commonwealth to a watchfulness against the spreading of so dangerous an evil. But nevertheless, we find those that say the same things, in other words. What else do they mean, who teach *that faith is not to be kept with hereticks*? Their meaning is, that the privilege of breaking faith belongs unto *themselves*: for they declare all that are not of their communion to be hereticks, or at least may declare them so whensoever they think fit. What can be the meaning of their asserting that *kings excommunicated forfeit their crowns and kingdoms*? It is evident that they there-  
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by arrogate unto *themselves* the power of deposing kings: because they challenge the power of excommunication, as the peculiar right of their hierarchy. That *dominion is founded in grace*, is also an assertion by which those who maintain it do plainly lay claim to the possession of *all things*. For they are not so wanting to themselves as not to profess, themselves to be the truly pious and faithful. These therefore, who attribute the faithful, religious and orthodox; that is, in plain terms, unto *themselves*; any peculiar privilege or power above other mortals, in civil concerns; or who, upon pretence of religion, do challenge any manner of authority over such as are not associated with them in their ecclesiastical communion; I say these have no right to be tolerated in this, by the magistrate; as neither those who will not own and teach the duty of tolerating all men in matters of mere religion. For what do all these and the like doctrines signify, but that those men may, and are ready upon any occasion to seize the government, and possess themselves of the estates of their fellow-subjects; and that they only ask leave to be tolerated by the magistrate so long, until they find themselves strong enough to effect it?

*Again*; that church can have no right to be tolerated by the magistrate, which is constituted upon such a bottom, that all those who enter into it do thereby, *ipso facto*, deliver themselves up to the protection and service of another earthly prince. For by this means the magistrate would give way to the settling of a foreign jurisdiction in his own country.



try, and suffer his own people to be listed, as it were, for soldiers against his own government. Nor does the frivolous distinction between the court and the church afford any remedy to this inconvenience; especially when both the one and the other are equally subject in civil matters to the absolute authority of the same person. It is ridiculous for any one to profess himself to be a Mahometan only in his religion, but in every thing else a faithful subject to a christian magistrate, whilst at the same time he acknowledges himself bound to yield blind obedience to the Musti of Constantinople; who himself is entirely obedient to the Ottoman emperor, and frames the oracles of that religion according to his pleasure. But this Mahometan living amongst christians, would yet more apparently renounce their government, if he acknowledged the same person to be head of his church who is the supreme magistrate in the state.

It remains that I say something concerning those assemblies, which being vulgarly called, nurseries of factions and seditions, are tho't to afford the strongest matter of objection against this doctrine of toleration. But this has not happened by any thing peculiar unto the genius of such assemblies, but by the unhappy circumstances of an oppressed liberty. These accusations would soon cease, if the law of toleration were once so settled, that all churches were obliged to lay down toleration as the foundation of their own liberty; and teach that liberty of conscience is every man's natural right, equally belonging to dissenters as to themselves; and that no

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body ought to be compelled in matters of religion, either by law or force. The establishment of this one thing would take away all ground of complaints and tumults upon account of conscience. And these causes of discontents and animosities being once removed, there would remain nothing in these assemblies that were not more peaceable, and less apt to produce disturbance of state, than in any other meetings whatsoever. But let us examine particularly the heads of these accusations.

You'll say, That *assemblies and meetings endanger the public peace, and threaten the commonwealth.* I answer: if this be so, why are there daily such numerous meetings in markets, and courts of judicature? and a concourse of people in cities suffered? You'll reply; these are civil assemblies; but those that we object against are ecclesiastical. I answer: 'tis a likely thing indeed, that such assemblies as are altogether remote from civil affairs, should be most apt to embroil them. But it will be urged still, that civil assemblies are open, and free for any one to enter into; whereas religious conventicles are more private, and thereby give opportunity to clandestine machinations. I answer, that this is *not strictly true*: for many civil assemblies are not open to every one. And if some religious meetings be private, who are they (I beseech you) that are to be blamed for it? Those that desire, or those that forbid their being public? Again; you'll say, that religious communion does exceedingly unite mens minds and affections to one another, and is therefore the more dangerous. But if this be so, why



Is not the magistrate afraid of his own church; and why does he not forbid their assemblies, as things dangerous to his government? You'll say, because he himself is a part, and even the head of them. As if he were not also a part of the commonwealth, and the head of the whole people.

Let us therefore deal plainly. The magistrate is afraid of other churches, but not of his own; because he is kind and favourable to the one, but severe and cruel to the other. *These* he treats like children, and indulges them even to wantonness: *those* he uses as slaves; and how blamelessly soever they demean themselves, recompenses them no other wise than by prisons, confiscations, and death. *These* he cherishes and defends: *those* he continually scourges and oppresses. Let him turn the tables: or let those dissenters enjoy but the same privileges in civils as his other subjects, and he will quickly find that these religious meetings will be no longer dangerous. For if men enter into seditious conspiracies, 'tis not religion that inspires them to it in their meetings; but their sufferings and oppressions that make them willing to ease themselves. Just and moderate governments are every where quiet, every where safe. But oppression raises ferments, and makes men struggle to cast off an uneasy and tyrannical yoke. I know that seditions are very frequently raised, upon pretence of religion. But 'tis as true that, for religion, subjects are frequently ill treated, and live miserably. Believe me, the stirrings that are made proceed not from any peculiar temper of this or that church or religious society; but from  
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the common disposition of all mankind, who when they groan under any heavy burthen, endeavour naturally to shake off the yoke that galls their necks. Suppose this business of religion were let alone, and that there were some other distinction made between men and men, upon account of their different complexions, shapes and features; so that those who have black hair (for example) or grey eyes, should not enjoy the same privileges as other citizens; that they should not be permitted either to buy or sell, or live by their callings; can it be doubted but these persons, thus distinguished from others by the colour of their hair and eyes, and united together by one common persecution, would be as dangerous to the magistrate, as any others that had associated themselves meerly upon the account of religion. Some enter into company for trade and profit: others, for want of business, have their clubs for claret: neighbourhoods join some, and religion others. But there is one only thing which gathers people into seditious commotions, and that is **OPPRESSION**.

You'll say; what, will you have people meet at divine service *against the magistrates will*? I answer; why, I pray, against his will? Is it not both lawful and necessary that they should meet? Against his will, do you say? That's what I complain of. That is the very root of all the mischief. Why are assemblies less sufferable in a church than in a market? Those that meet there are not more vicious, or more turbulent, than those that meet elsewhere. Take away the partiality that is used towards



ards them in matters of common right; change the laws; take away the penalties unto which they are subjected; and all things will immediately become safe and peaceable. Nay, those that are averse to the religion of the magistrate, will think themselves so much the more bound to maintain the peace of the commonwealth, as their condition is better in that place than elsewhere; and all the several congregations, like so many guardians of the public peace, will watch one another, that nothing may be changed in the form of the government: because they can hope for nothing better than what they already enjoy; that is, an equal condition with their fellow subjects, under a just and moderate government. Now if that church, which agrees in religion with the prince, be esteemed the chief support of any civil government, and that for no other reason than because the prince is kind, and the laws are favorable to it; how much greater will be the security of a government, where all good subjects, of whatsoever church they be, without any distinction upon account of religion, enjoying the same favour of the prince, and the same benefit of the laws, shall become the common support and guard of it; and where none will have any occasion to fear the severity of the laws, but those that do injuries to their neighbors, and offend against the civil peace?

That we may draw towards a conclusion. The sum of all we drive at is, *that every man may enjoy the same rights that are granted to others.* Is it permitted to worship God in the Roman manner? Let it

it be permitted to do it in the Geneva form also. Is it permitted to speak Latin in the market-place? Let those that have a mind to it, be permitted to do it also in the church. Is it lawful for any man in his own house, to kneel, stand, sit, or use any other posture; and to cloath himself in white or black, in short or in long garments? Let it not be made unlawful to eat bread, drink wine, or wash with water, in the church. In a word; whatsoever things are left free by law in the common occasions of life, let them remain free unto every church in divine worship. Let no man's life, or body, or house, or estate, suffer any manner of evil upon these accounts. Can you allow of the Presbyterian discipline? Why should not the Episcopal also have what they like?

Ecclesiastical assemblies, and sermons, are justifiable by daily experience, and public allowance. These are allowed to people of some one persuasion, why not to all? If any thing pass in a religious meeting seditiously, and contrary to the public peace, it is to be punished in the same manner, and no otherwise than if it had happened in a fair or market. These meetings ought not to be sanctuaries for factious fellows; nor ought it to be less lawful for men to meet in churches than in halls; nor are one part of the subjects to be esteemed more blameable for their meeting together than another. Every one is to be accountable for his own actions; and no man is to be laid under a suspicion or odium, for the fault of another. Those that are seditious, murderers, thieves, robbers, adulterers, slanderers,



slanderers, &c. of whatsoever church, whether national or not, ought to be punished and suppressed. But those whose words and actions are peaceable, ought to be upon equal terms with their fellow subjects. Thus if solemn assemblies, observations of festivals, public worship, be permitted to any one sort of professors; all these things ought to be permitted to the Presbyterians, Independants, Anabaptists, Arminians, Quakers, and others, with the same liberty. Nay, if we may openly speak the truth, and as becomes one man to another; neither Pagan nor Jew, ought to be excluded from the civil rights of the commonwealth, because of his religion. The gospel commands no such thing. The church which *judges not those that are without*, (2 Cor. 5. 12, 13.) wants it not. And the commonwealth, which embraces indifferently all men that are honest, peaceable, and industrious, requires it not. Shall we suffer a Pagan to deal and trade with us, and shall we not suffer him to pray unto and worship God? If we allow the Jews to have private houses and dwellings amongst us, why should we not allow them to have synagogues? Is their doctrine more false, their worship more abominable, or is the civil peace more endangered by their meeting in public than in their private houses? But if these things may be granted to Jews and Pagans, surely the condition of any christians ought not to be worse than theirs in a christian commonwealth.

You'll say, perhaps, yes, it ought to be; because they are more inclinable to factions. I answer; is  
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this the fault of the christian religion ? If it be so, truly the christian religion is the worst of all religions, and ought neither to be embraced nor tolerated by any commonwealth. For if *this* be the genius, *this* the nature of the christian religion, to be turbulent, and destructive to the civil peace ; that church itself which the magistrate indulges will not always be innocent. But far be it from us to say any such thing of that religion, which carries the greatest opposition to covetousness, ambition, discord, contention, and all manner of inordinate desires ; and is the most modest and peaceable religion that ever was. We must therefore seek another cause of those evils that are charged upon religion. And if we consider right, we shall find it to consist wholly in the subject that I am treating of. It is not the diversity of opinions, (which cannot be avoided) but the refusal of toleration to those that are of different opinions, that has produced all the bustles and wars that have been in the christian world, upon account of religion. The heads and leaders of the church, moved by avarice and insatiable desire of dominion, making use of the immoderate ambition of magistrates, and the credulous superstition of the giddy multitude, have incensed and animated them against those that dissent from themselves ; by preaching unto them, contrary to the laws of the gospel, or the precepts of charity, that schismatics and hereticks are to be rooted out of their possessions and destroyed. And thus have they mixed together, and confounded two things that are in themselves most different, the church and  
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the commonwealth. Now as it is very difficult for men patiently to suffer themselves to be stript of the goods which they have got by their honest industry, and contrary to all the laws of equity, both human and divine, to be delivered up for a prey to other mens violence and rapine; especially when they are altogether blameless, and that the occasion for which they are thus treated, does not at all belong to the jurisdiction of the magistrate, but entirely to the conscience of every particular man, for the conduct of which he is accountable to God only; what else can be expected, but that these men, growing weary of the evils under which they labor, should in the end think it lawful for them to resist force with force, and to defend their natural rights (which are not forfeitable upon account of religion) with arms as well as they can? That this has been hitherto the ordinary course of things, is abundantly evident in history: and that it will continue to be so hereafter, is but too apparent in reason. It cannot indeed be otherwise, so long as the principle of persecution for religion shall prevail, as it has done hitherto; and so long as those who ought to be the preachers of peace and concord, shall continue, with all their art and strength, to excite men to arms, and sound the trumpet of war. But that magistrates should thus suffer these incendiaries, and disturbers of the public peace, might justly be wondered at, if it did not appear that they have been invited by them unto a participation of the spoil, and have therefore thought fit to make use of their covetousness and pride, as means whereby to increase

increase their own power. For who does not see that *these good men* are indeed more ministers of the government than ministers of the gospel ; and that by flattering the ambition, and favoring the dominion of princes and men in authority, they endeavor with all their might to promote that tyranny in the commonwealth, which otherwise they should not be able to establish in the church ? This is the unhappy agreement that we see between the church and state. Whereas if each of them would contain itself within its own bounds, the one attending to the worldly welfare of the commonwealth, the other to glorify God, it is impossible that any discord should ever have happened between them. *Sed, pudet hæc opprobria, &c.* God Almighty grant, I beseech him, that the gospel of peace may at length be preached, and that civil magistrates growing more careful to conform their own consciences to the law of God, and less solicitous about the binding of other mens consciences by human laws, may, like fathers of their country, direct all their counsels and endeavors to promote universally the civil welfare of all their children, except only of such as are ungovernable, and injurious (in civil matters) to their brethren ; and that all ecclesiastical men, who boast themselves to be the successors of the apostles, walking peaceably and modestly in the apostles steps, without intermeddling with state affairs, may apply themselves wholly to promote the glory of God & the salvation of souls. *Farewell.*

POSTSCRIPT.





## P O S T S C R I P T.

**P**ERHAPS it may not be amiss to add a few things concerning *heresy* and *schism*. A Turk is not, nor can be, either heretick or schismatick, to a christian; and if any man fall off from the christian faith to Mahometism, he does not thereby become a heretick or schismatick, but an apostate and an infidel. This no body doubts of. And by this it appears, that men of different religions cannot be hereticks or schismaticks to one another.

We are to enquire therefore what men are of the same religion. Concerning which it is manifest, that those who have one and the same rule of faith and worship, are of the same religion; and those who have not the same rule of faith and worship, are of different religions. For since all things that belong unto *that* religion, are contained in *that* rule, it follows necessarily, that those who agree in one rule, are of one and the same religion; and *vice versa*. Thus Turks and Christians are of different religions, becaule *these* take the holy scriptures to be the rule of their religion, and *those* the alcoran. And for the same reason there may be different religions also even amongst Christians. The Papists and the Lutherans, though both of them profess faith in Christ, and are therefore called Christi-  
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ans, yet are not both of the same religion, because *these* acknowledge nothing but the holy scriptures to be the rule and foundation of their religion; *those* take in also traditions and the decrees of popes, and of all these together make the rule of their religion. And thus the Christians of St. John, and the Christians of Geneva, are of different religions; because *these* also take only the scriptures, and *those*, I know not what traditions, for the rule of their religion.

This being settled, it follows; *First*, That heresy is a separation made in ecclesiastical communion between men of the same religion, for some opinions no way contained in the rule itself. And *Secondly*, That amongst those who acknowledge nothing but the holy scriptures to be their rule of faith, heresy is a separation made in their christian communion, for opinions not contained in the express words of scripture. Now this separation may be made in a twofold manner.

1. When the greater part, or the stronger part of the church separates itself from others, by excluding them out of her communion, because they will not profess their belief of certain opinions which are not to be found in the express words of scripture. For it is not the fewness of those who are separated, nor the authority of the magistrate, that can make any man guilty of heresy. But he only is an heretick who divides the church into parts, introduces names and marks of distinction, and voluntarily makes a separation because of such opinions.

2. When



2. When any one separates himself from the communion of a church, because that church does not publicly profess some certain opinions which the holy scriptures do not expressly teach.

Both these are *Hereticks* : *because they err in fundamentals, and they err obstinately against knowledge.* For when they have determined the holy scriptures to be the only foundation of faith ; they nevertheless lay down certain propositions as fundamental, which are not in the scripture ; and because others will not acknowledge these additional opinions of theirs, nor build upon them as if they were necessary and fundamental, they therefore make a separation in the church ; either by withdrawing themselves from the others, or expelling the others from them. Nor does it signify any thing for them to say that their confessions and symbols are agreeable to scripture, and to the analogy of faith. For if they be express in words of scripture, there can be no question about them ; because *those* are acknowledged by all christians to be of divine inspiration, and therefore fundamental. But if they say that the articles which they require to be professed are consequences deduced from the scripture ; it is undoubtedly well done of them to believe and profess such things as seem unto them so agreeable to the rule of faith ; but it would be very ill done to croud those things upon others, unto whom they do not seem to be the certain doctrines of the scripture. And to make a separation for such things as these, which neither are nor can be fundamental, is to become *Hereticks*. For I do not think there is any  
man

man arrived to that degree of madness, as that he dare give out his consequences and interpretations of scripture as *divine inspirations*, and compare the articles of faith that he has framed according to his own fancy with the authority of the scripture. I know there are some propositions so evidently agreeable to scripture, that nobody can deny them to be drawn from thence ; but about *those* therefore there can be no difference. This only I say, that however clearly we may think this or the other doctrine to be deduced from scripture, we ought not therefore to impose it upon others, as a necessary article of faith, because we believe it to be agreeable to the rule of faith ; unless we would be content also that other doctrines should be imposed upon us in the same manner ; and that we should be compelled to receive and profess all the different and contradictory opinions of Lutherans, Calvinists, Remonstrants, Shakers, Anabaptists, and other sects which the contrivers of symbols, systems and confessions, are accustomed to deliver unto their followers as genuine and necessary deductions from the holy scripture. I cannot but wonder at the extravagant arrogance of those men who think that they themselves can explain things necessary to salvation more clearly than the Holy Ghost, the eternal and infinite wisdom of God.

Thus much concerning *heresy* ; which word in common use is applied only to the doctrinal part of religion. Let us now consider *schism*, which is a crime near akin to it. For both those words seem unto me to signify an *ill-grounded separation in ecclesiastical*



*fiastical communion, made about things not necessary.* But since use, which is the supreme law in matter of language, has determined that heresy relates to errors in faith and schism to those in worship or discipline, we must consider them under that distinction.

*Schism* then, for the same reasons that have already been alledged, is nothing else but a separation made in the communion of the church, upon account of something in divine worship, or ecclesiastical discipline, that is not any necessary part of it. Now nothing in worship or discipline can be necessary to christian communion, but what Christ our *Legislator*, or the apostles, by inspiration of the Holy Spirit, have commanded in exprels words.

In a word : he that denies not any thing that the holy scriptures teach in exprels words, nor makes a separation upon occasion of any thing that is not manifestly contained in the sacred text ; however he may be nick-named by any sect of christians, and declared by some, or all of them, to be utterly void of true christianity, yet in deed and in truth this man cannot be either a Heretick or Schismatick.

These things might have been explained more largely, and more advantageously : but it is enough to have hinted at them, thus briefly, to a person of your parts.

F I N I S.

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